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ABSTRACT

The Ministers of Education of the European Community (EC) drafted a resolution in May 1988 regarding the consolidation of the European dimension in education. The resolution is meant to contribute to young people (1) becoming more aware of the European identity and the value of European civilization and of its foundations; (2) realizing the advantages of the European Community and the challenges they will encounter on gaining access to a larger economic and social territory; and (3) improving their knowledge about the historical, cultural, economic, and social aspects of the EC and its member states and realizing the significance of the cooperation among member states and other countries in Europe and the rest of the world. Since teachers play a key role in actual educational innovation, teacher training colleges should be involved in plans for implementation of the European dimension in an early stage. The limits and possibilities of the individual teacher also should be taken into account. And finally, a national plan must be developed and carried out within the formal educational system. The action plan for implementation of this new policy in the Netherlands involves (1) the evaluation of teaching materials on the European dimension; (2) the development of a core curriculum; (3) the design of testing instruments, the revision of existing teaching material, or the development of new materials; (4) the involvement of teacher training colleges; (5) the development of small regional in-service training centers for teachers; (6) teachers' conferences for information exchange; and (7) the contacts with educational publishers. (JB)

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EMBEDDING THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION IN EDUCATION

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EMBEDDING THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION IN EDUCATION

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1. A factor which should lend a more international character to social studies education is the draft resolution of the Ministers of Education of the European Community in May 1988 regarding the consolidation of the European dimension in education. By means of several new co-ordinated measures in the period 1988-1992, the resolution is meant to contribute to:
   - young people becoming more aware of the European identity, the value of European civilization and of its foundations, particularly the protection of the principles of democracy, social justice and respect for human rights;
   - young people realizing the advantages of the Community but also what challenges they will encounter on gaining access to a larger economic and social territory;
   - young people improving their knowledge about the historical, cultural, economic and social aspects of the Community and its Member States, and realizing the significance of the co-operation between the Member States of the European Community and other countries in Europe and the rest of the world.

   To achieve a "Europe for the Citizens", the Member States have been urged to take measures within the limits of their own specific educational policies. More specifically, there are plans to publish a policy document focusing on a structural place for the European dimension in the educational programs for History, Geography, Economics and Social Sciences, among other subjects. Initial and in-service teacher training should also explicitly make room for the European dimension. Within Member States, this could be realized by offering high-quality teaching material and instructing staff at teacher training colleges. An interstate way of achieving this aim is co-operation between teacher training colleges, with the object of increasing the mobility of students and teachers. In any case, it is clear that the European Community will stimulate co-operation between teachers to promote the integration process. For pupils, too, more and more opportunities wil be created for actually experiencing what everyday life is like in other European countries.

   With a view to the "magic" year 1992 -Europe without boundaries- colloquia will be organized under the auspices of the European Commission. The aim of these colloquia is to analyse the effectiveness of the curriculum and implementation strategies now in use, and explore possibilities of collaboration. From 1989 on, a Summer University will be held each year for staff of teaching training colleges and specialists. It is hoped that this exchange and experience will lead to the discovery of new and better strategies for introducing the European dimension. In short, the next few years wil be dominated by European Unification. Of course, this is partly motivated by the desire to strengthen Europe's economic position in relation to Japan and the USA. In 1992, a comparative study will have to prove whether young people's knowledge has actually improved. Already it is evident that the available funds and the political will vary from country to country.

2. <u>Developments until now</u>

   Over the last 10 to 15 years, a wide range of initiatives has been taken at national and European levels aimed at bringing Europe or

the so-called European dimension into the schools. Handouts have been written for teachers, colourful information brochures have been distributed, teachers' conferences have been held, joint projects have been launched, audiovisual materials have been developed and model curricula have been presented. However, from recent publications we observe that the so-called European dimension is only marginally represented in curricula, teaching methods and classroom practice in the European member states. A comparative study of several countries has yielded extremely disappointing results. Poor results, however, demand an analysis. Why do the publications of non-governmental organizations in Germany, the Netherlands and Britain have so little influence on Social Studies curricula and classroom practice? Is this to be blamed on the quality of the teaching material and handbooks published, or on the absence of a development and implementation strategy? Or are materials developed and the average teacher can do without? Or is an NGO such as a small-scale centre for European Studies doomed to a place on the periphery of the educational system, its impact reaching no further than a few interested schools? Or is it because public support for European education is lacking, while national authorities sit on the fence? Or is it due to the absence of a well-constructed curriculum project offering a coherent description of development strategy, evaluation, training and dissemination?

In any case, it is evident that the suggestions put forward in various papers are rather incoherent, and lack sufficient basis to offer a perspective in the medium term. Attention is focused on teachers, schools, development of teaching material, and a more prominent role for non-governmental organizations, without any indication being given of the minimal conditions for a structural embedment of the European dimension. Structural embedment entails the compulsory inclusion of the European dimension in the reaching matter of Social Studies. Without this, discussion of Europe at school will remain an entirely non-committal matter, up to the willingness of teachers to adopt such themes. This would imply a continuation of current classroom practice, in which Europe comes up for discussion once in a while, more or less accidentally, without systematic embedding and without specially developed didactics.

If the European Dimension is to acquire a more prominent and meaningful place in Dutch education, a core curriculum will have to be formulated, to which various interest groups contribute, and which puts forward valid proposals on content, place and didactics of this peripheral thematic field. Furthermore, suggestions should be offered how to incorporate the European Dimension into existing school subjects such as History, Economics, Geography and Political teaching. The high priority of a core curriculum as a starting point is to do with fundamental developments in Dutch educational policy.

3. <u>Conditions for improving quality</u>

It is obvious that teachers play a key role in actual educational innovation. Consequently, teacher training colleges, which are primarily responsible for initial and in-service training, should be involved in plans for implementation of the European Dimension in an early stage. The limits and possbilities of the individual teacher, and thus of classroom practice, should also be taken into

account. However, for teacher training a document, a core curriculum must be available containing clear-cut proposals on goal, content, place and didactics, and suggestions for incorporation in existing subjects. Such a curriculum framework could serve as a basic document, reflecting a nationwide consensus. Such a basic document could guide the development of teaching material, tests and the content of in-service training activities. This basic document should give a balanced and sound description of the various dimensions of the "theme Europe". This could be achieved by defining a political, an economic, a geographical and a historical dimension, to be discussed in the lessons for each subject or cluster of subjects. On no account should European education be treated as a separate school subject, but integrated into the compulsory programs for existing subjects.

In order to devote more and better attention to the European dimension, a national plan must be developed and carried out within the formal educational system. If the responsibility is left to non-governmental organizations, the informal circuit, the effects will remain limited, since this will continue the present non-committal situation. Only centrally prescribed examination programs (= basic education and learning outcomes) can lead to large-scale educational change. This is a question of professional status. A curriculum project with expertise at its disposal in the fields of curriculum development, evaluation and training, and addressing itself to the planning of implementation activities, is likely to succeed.

4. Action Plan for European dimension in the Netherlands

A. Curriculum development

- qualitative analysis and assessment of the usability of teaching materials on the European dimension;
- analysis of the European dimension in (examination) programs for History, Geography, Economics and Political Education;
- development of a core curriculum for the European dimension, with learning outcomes described in terms of dimensions (subject aspects) of Geography, History, Economics, Political Education;
- the design of testing instruments and experimental tests to go with the core curriculum;
- the revision of existing teaching material or the development of new exemplary material which is readily transferable and usable with existing methods.

B. Implementation

- passing on of the core curriculum to teacher training colleges for initial and in-service training;
- small-scale, regional in-service training centres for teachers;
- teachers' conferences for information exchange;
- integration into examination programs;
- contacts with educational publishers.

5. Proposals for co-operation at European level

- Curriculum development, research and training activities within individual institutions. Making a survey of existing expertise in Europe by means of national reports or supplementary reports on institutions in Europe with specific know-how.

- Launching of small-scale European projects, in which know-how in different fields is brought together. For example curriculum development, didactics, textbook analysis, in-service training, information exchange, etc. Research into new ways of using media to support activities aimed at teachers and pupils.
- Establishment of a central European co-ordinating body, which not only keeps records of curricula, materials, research results, etc., but also proposes new initiatives and is familiar with the state of the art in all member countries.

6. In summary, the draft resolution of the Ministers of Education in the European Community of May 1988 constitutes an important political impulse towards strengthening the position of the European dimension in education. In this resolution, all Member States are urged to takes measures to integrate the European dimension in existing subjects such as History, Geography and the social sciences. The result of this initiative in 1992 -Europe without boundaries- should be that young people have more insight into the historical, cultural and political aspects of Europe. At the same time, the efforts of the formal educational system towards embedment of the European dimension offer opportunities for more European co-operation and co-ordination in the field of social and political education.